

**A MARXIST ANALYSIS OF HEGEMONY AND THE ROLE OF
INTELLECTUALS
IN THE KOREAN TV SHOW *SECRET GARDEN***

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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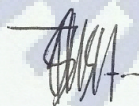
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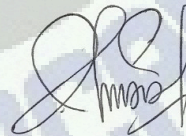
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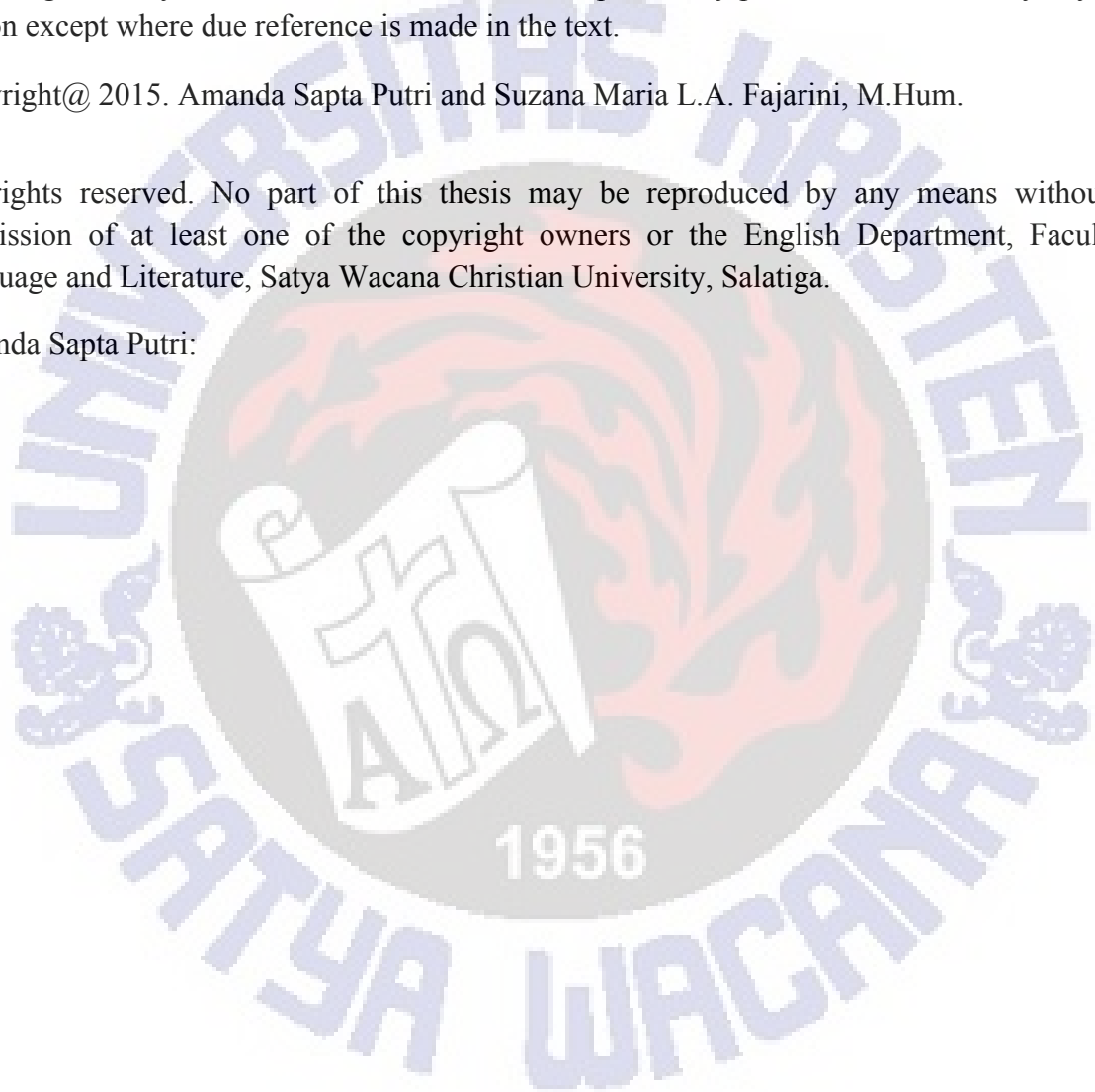
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A Marxist Analysis of Hegemony and The Role of Intellectuals in The Korean TV Show *Secret Garden*

Abstract

This paper derives from the theory of hegemony and the role of intellectuals from the works of Antonio Gramsci, to analyze the unequal power distribution, class struggle, and the raise of mass awareness in the South Korean society shown in *Secret Garden* and other similarly-themed, and extensively popular K-dramas. Using *Secret Garden* as a sample for framework analysis, I seek other aspect(s) that come into assistance in re-establishing hegemony (looking at how hegemony is still exercised in the society of today), despite the vast availability of education. The result of this research is that mass media's access to people's daily life has played a significant role in building hegemony, as well as, on the contrary, establishing a counter hegemony. Other findings show that there are two possible outcomes of the mass media influence on society, which are the re-establishment of hegemony, and the raise of mass awareness.

Keywords: hegemony, role of intellectuals

I. Introduction

South Korea has been striking the world with its sudden immense popularity. From its expansion initially into South East Asia, then throughout Asia, and now penetrating through the American and European continent, Korean entertainment industry has gained a huge number of admirers and recognition as a separate wave called *Hallyu* (translated as Korean Wave). This successful entertainment industry has become one of the major contributors to the national economy (Yong Jin, 2012).

In less than 10 years, *Hallyu* has further spread its charm and influence to today's young adults around the world. *Hallyu* first started with the production of Korean drama series or K-drama in Asian regions. Through these K-dramas, South Korea introduced Korean culture and lifestyle to audience around the world. Other than introducing its indigenous culture to the world, these K-dramas have started to highlight social issues that exist among today's South Korean

society. Several Korean dramas that I watched particularly highlight issues on social class, that has always been a widely discussed topic not only in South Korea, but also around the world. This is also depicted in one TV show that I am particularly interested in entitled “Secret Garden”. The drama is produced by Oh Se Kang and is written by Kim Eun Sook.

The story follows a common K-drama story plot in which a rich male stumbled upon an ordinary female. They would face contradictions in their society together, and eventually, the two will be united. Aside from “Secret Garden”, there are also examples of other similar famous K-dramas I have watched, such as “Full House”, “Boys Before Flowers”, “The Heirs”, and “The Birth of Beauty”. These dramas have one common theme; society’s struggle to reach the ideal social status, and be accepted in the elite circle. These dramas portray that the elite society must consist of people with good looks, wealth, and media recognition.

Looking at the social aspects of the work, it is evident that Marxist ideas are incorporated into the story. The ideas can be seen through the vivid display of social gap, and through the unresolved opposition between the bourgeois and the proletariats. The haves exercise dominance and power over the other through material wealth (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 656). However, since the establishment of Marxism in the late 19th century, the definition of dominance have shifted into a concept where people are now ruled by means of ideology; not coercively anymore. This kind of psychological dominance is called hegemony.

Using Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, I will dig deeper into *Secret Garden*, utilizing it as a model that represents other K-dramas with similar issues. The notion will explain the Hallyu imagery of “love that unites”, to reveal the struggle of the society to upvalue themselves in the society. Also, by using Gramsci’s notion of the role of intellectuals, I will discover the society’s intellectuals’ effort in building a counter hegemony of the current social system.

Gramsci said in one of his writings on working-class education and culture, that:

“...Culture, literacy, has thus acquired a purpose, and for as long as this purpose remains alive in people's consciousness, love of knowledge will be a compelling force.” (Forgacs, 2000, 57-58).

However, in the era where education is readily accessible by almost everyone, it seems that what Gramsci proposed about the role of education has become less significant in bringing mass awareness, portrayed in *Secret Garden*. In *Secret Garden*, this consciousness does not seem to be aroused by means of education alone. Therefore, this research will also answer the question of the significance of the intellectuals in breaking the hegemony, and whether there are other factors that emerge as an equally potential system that is able to assist the intellectuals in bringing mass-consciousness in the society.

Also, looking at how this social struggle issue is being repeated in world-widely famous K-dramas, this raises a question; What is the purpose of this widespread issue through these K-dramas –as a satirical art to help raise people’s awareness of their role as intellectuals, or on the other hand, a tool to reshape and reintroduce the concept hegemony in modern society?

II. Theoretical Discussion

Marxism

Karl Marx was a German philosopher who resided in Paris and London in the middle of nineteenth century, during the most prominent time of industrialization (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 644). His viewpoints stood in opposition to the principles of industrial capitalism in which people were free in terms of finance, but then were forced to undergo division of social classes and unequal capital distribution. The situation at that time was, as quoted from *Literary Theory: an Anthology* by Rivkin and Ryan:

“When Marx wrote his major works ... the ideals of socialism were emerging in counterpoint to the principles and realities of industrial capitalism –individual freedom in economic matters, and intractable inequality in the distribution of wealth, severe class differentiation, and brutal poverty for those without property.” (644).

This sudden epidemic of capitalism drove Marx to see the world through the principles of materials. Marxism seeks to explain the notion that the world is not an embodiment of spiritual ideas (as previously believed in ‘idealist historiography’) but it stands on the fundamental composition of physical (history of labor) and material matters (material history) (Williams, 2009: 18). In reality, the world, as seen by Marx, is driven by financial freedom forming a society that subdivides itself into parts, and this phenomenon of financially driven society is called capitalism.

The division of a capitalist society is further extended into two “spheres of influence” (Mbengo, 2005: 27); the economic ‘base’, and the political and ideological ‘superstructure’. The ‘base’ consists of material means of production, distribution, and exchange, while the ‘superstructure’ consists of the intelligence which is the ‘cultural’ world of ideas, art, religion, law, politics, and so on (Barry, 2002: 157). The base determines the course of change of the superstructure, and therefore, it can be concluded that based on Marxist view, everything we see and learn from our society, beliefs, and culture, originates from the course of economy.

Looking at how Marxism criticizes the capitalist society, we can see clearly that power distribution runs parallel to capital or wealth distribution. Capital here is defined as “a sum of material products; it is a sum of commodities, of exchange values, of social magnitudes.” (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 663). Evidently, those who own the means of production exert economic, ideological, and political power. This results in the emergence of 2 major classes; the bourgeois and the proletariat. The bourgeois has the money and means of production, and therefore, power. In contrast, the proletariat is the working-class, a part of the capital with no

authority, selling their labor to the bourgeois to fulfill their basic financial needs. At first, this unfairness might go unnoticed. But overtime, societal awareness will rise and demand for equal rights. This will result in “conflicts of interest”, which eventually, according to Marx, will direct the society towards a socialist revolution, and creation of classless society (Mbengo, 200: 22). This basic understanding of Marxism will lead us to understand how this idea has become the turning point in the philosophy of material, and how it evolves with the world.

Ideology

Napoleon describes ideology as ‘knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history’ (Williams, 2009: 57). More explicitly, Marx and Engels define ideology as ‘the real ground of history’ which is created based on ‘self-interest’ (2009: 58). Ideology is generated from human experience, thoughts, and desires that direct human’s actions, becoming the foundation of change and movement in the course of history.

The notion regarding ideology as the ground of history in the capitalist society is further stated in “The German Ideology” by Williams (1846) that:

“... the ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.” (58)

Thus, in a capitalist society, ideology is created by dominant individuals to serve their own interest; the interest of the haves. It is also used by the bourgeois to lure the proletariat into following the rules set by the bourgeois, and thus, sustain the imbalance society. Marx also creates his own ideology based on his self-interest to counter the beliefs incorporated by the capitalist society. However, in correlation to Marx, the more appropriate term than self-interest might be ‘ethical complexity’, which shows the capabilities of human to think and decide what is good or evil, pragmatically (McCloskey, 2010: 6).

Hegemony

One ideology that I will use to analyze the phenomenon of power and wealth distribution within the Korean society present in TV series is the notion of hegemony. The theory of hegemony was brought forward by the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, Antonio Gramsci. He wrote this theory when he was imprisoned under Mussolini's regime due to his consistent struggle in bringing mass consciousness to the society. Hegemony is described by Gramsci as the foundation of a ruling class, in which ideas are used as a power to eliminate class struggle, "capable of muting it [conflict of interest] sufficiently to allow class societies to function" (Bates, 2013: 351). Hegemony is the disguise of ethical complexity by providing the subject with inadequate knowledge of what happens in reality, so that the subject can only see the world through the propaganda of those in power. What the society knows is that the service they do is for the betterment of the State. In response to that, the State gives out hope that by becoming functionaries of the State, the society will gain protection, security, and well-being. They do not realize that their life is under the control of the dominant group.

The Intellectual

Gramsci said in one of his treatises on "The Intellectuals" that every man is capable of thinking and becoming an intellectual. He further elaborates the term intellectual as "... anyone whose function in the society is primarily that of organizing, administering, directing, educating or leading others." (Forgacs, 2000: 300). As one of the good qualities of mankind, it is important that all men are trained to become one. Therefore, a means of harnessing this capability is created in the form of state's educational system –school. According to Gramsci, "School is the

instrument through which intellectuals of various levels are elaborated,” (Hoare and Smith, 1992: 10).

The intellectuals are further divided into two large groups, traditional and organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are those of outstanding capability, seemingly dispatched from both social classes, creating a society of their own. This comprises professors, scholars, and respected religious leaders (though this is just another illusion created by the dominant group). The other, the organic ones are representatives from all kinds of classes; the product of the state's educational system. They are the 'tools' of the dominant class to control the society. They exist in every level of social strata in order to accommodate the needs to maintain hegemony by putting them into function from the bottom (base) to the top (superstructure) ladder of the social superstructure (Hoare and Smith, 1992: 12). Their function includes that in juridical government. The purpose is for dominance (through creation of regulations and laws) to be concealed as a legal activity. The functionary intellectuals here are used to execute laws to anticipate the smallest hint of conflict (1992: 12).

On the other hand, Gramsci also saw that through education, the intellectuals have the capacity to understand the world better. This understanding will lead the society to the awareness of ethical complexity of what is good or evil. The intellectual now has another role of bringing mass consciousness, and create a counter hegemony (Forgacs, 2000: 157). This notion could be understood by tracing Gramsci's success in the political field through his literate and well-educated family background, despite his poor financial and physical condition (Hoare and Smith, 1992: 25).

However, it has been nearly 100 years after the publication of Gramsci's theory, and still, capitalism soars. This means that despite what Gramsci proposed, education is no longer the

quintessence of freedom from hegemony. Freedom of speech and democracy now exists, but the mind is still controlled by the ideas of capitalism. This means that the state (or the bourgeois) has other ways to bring back hegemony into the society. Hegemony now comes not in the form of an authoritarian leadership anymore, but in the form of financial enslavement through the portrayal in the image of the Korean ideals, as shown in *Secret Garden*.

This is a different era, where literacy is no longer a privilege, and education is widely accessible by almost everyone (and also completely taken over by the state). Therefore, the question that emerges from this is: Is education and knowledge still the only way to bring mass awareness?

The intention of this research is to analyze Korean society's power distribution and class struggle of the proletariat. Using Gramsci's theory of hegemony, I will examine how the hegemony is applied in the society's daily life, as well as how significant the role of intellectuals is in the struggle to create a counter hegemony. Then this research will also answer the following questions: Is there any other factor(s) that can bring about mass awareness, aside from the academic competence of the organic intellectuals? What is the purpose of the mass-produced K-drama; to raise people's awareness, or to propagandize hegemony into the younger generation?

III. Summary of Text

The story circles around the life of Kim Joo Won and Gil Ra Im. Joo Won is a billionaire by inheritance who is spoiled and who always mingles with the elites. Joo Won's life also centres around his inherited department store and resort businesses. He was raised by his mother, because his father left when he was still young. His family is respected in the society due to his late grandfather's position as an ex South Korean prime minister. Since Joo Won is obviously on

the very top of the strata, people are always trying to take advantage of him. Everyone is struggling to be accepted into the top class of the society.

The female main character, Gil Ra Im, is a stuntwoman, studying and working in an action school, whose father died during his duty as a firefighter. One day Joo Won accidentally met Ra Im in a filming location, whom he mistakenly thought was an actress who dated his cousin, Oska, the Hallyu star. Starting from that day, Joo Won, who had never seen reality other than his jet set life started to get curious about Ra Im and eventually fell in love with her. He was amused with the fact that he could be attracted to a person who lived a life much poorer than he does, with common family and educational background.

Ra Im saw Joo Won as a stalker and kept pushing him despite his real identity and position in social class. At first, Joo Won thought that like other girls, Ra Im would become much nicer to him once she knew how rich, powerful, and appealing he is. In contrary, Joo Won gets even more frustrated because Ra Im's attitude towards him does not change at all. She cares less and continues to pursue her dreams of becoming a professional action movie actress and prefers her family that consists of her best friend and her action school members.

Things get complicated when Joo Won started invading her personal life, including buying her things, trying to get into her society, and most prominently, supporting her in ways she never thought possible for her to get her dream. The problem lays not in what Joo Won does but in the position he is in, as a member of a wealthy, respected family. His mother wants him to marry the daughter of noble families, and she would never accept Ra Im. She constantly insults Ra Im and tries her best to protect Joo Won from Ra Im. Strangely enough, as though they are fated for each other, they are constantly finding their ways back into each other.

After all the difficulties coming from their constant societal condemnation, there is an event that gives light to their relationship: the fact that Joo Won was once saved by Ra Im's father. Realizing that she owes much to Ra Im's father, Joo Won's mother keeps begging Ra Im not to exchange her father's merits with a chance of marrying Joo Won. She stands firmly, holding the thought that she would prefer to lose everything rather than losing Joo Won to the lowly Ra Im. In the end, though Joo Won was threatened as well, he keeps to his decision to marry Ra Im. The story ends with a happy ending; they are finally together, though Joo Won's mother do not approve of their marriage and Joo Won is disowned by his mother.

IV. Discussion

In analyzing how hegemony and role of intellectuals take place in *Secret Garden*, I will focus on three episodes in the series; episode 1, 3, and 4. These three episodes will also help reveal another aspect, besides education, that supports the formation of counter hegemony in the context of the Korean society in *Secret Garden*.

1. *Hegemony: Unequal Power distribution*

As Gramsci stated in his writings on hegemony, it is inevitable that the bourgeois exert power due to their dominance in the world of production. Their power extends not only in the economic sector, but also throughout the political and ideological dominance (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 673). Society seems to have no rights to fight against the higher authorities, and if they insist on rebelling, there are laws set to prevent conflict to be spread much further. There is also an element of "spontaneous" submission given by the proletariat to the dominant group, because of the established ideology that being respected at all cause is the rights of the haves (673). This

is seen as a common practice among the society, and will continue to run that way as long as hegemony is maintained.

In *Secret Garden*, the dominance of the bourgeois is vividly shown by the image of the successors of rich and noble families, who are able to do whatever they want. They have all the money, and obviously, the power, to make things work the way they want. They are raised by their parents to believe that it is not a problem to look down on people who own less than them. Even to the point of trespassing commonly practised local ethics and morals just for the sake of justifying their opinion.

In episode 1, the issue on power and dominance begins with the scene where Ra Im visited her housemate's working place to get the house key. Her housemate, Ah Young, works in the VVIP department store lounge owned by Joo Won. The scene first started with the conversation between Yoon Seul, Joo Won's arranged marriage partner, and her friend.

"He's the first man who hasn't fallen for my modern woman act. Anyways, he just left really coldly. Looking very attractive from the back." (Yoon Seul was telling her friend about Joo Won after their first date)

*"... Do you want him to know? Do you think that he would have come out to meet me if he knew? **Drink your tea.**" (Ep. 1, 06:16)*

The conversation shows that even between friends, there is power exerted over the other, because of class difference, or shall we say, difference in material wealth. The other party, spontaneously obeys to what the more dominant party tells her to without even thinking about it. Yoon Seul did not force her to drink her tea by power. However, since hegemony is exercised here, there exist "... the domination of a set of ruling beliefs and values through 'consent' rather than through 'coercive power'." (Bertens, 2009: 88). Yoon Seul's friend gave consent to the command because she thought that she deserved this treatment.

The scene continues with the entrance of Ra Im into the VVIP lounge, walking indifferently, wearing a very boyish and casual outfit, showing her dragon tattoo on her right arm. Upon her entrance, all guests whispered in curiosity and disgust, including Yoon Seul and her friend. This annoyed Yoon Seul, so she decided to approach her to give some warning.

“In a short time I’m going to be the wife of the owner. Am I just supposed to watch this place turn into the neighborhood mart overnight? As the future lady of the house, should I teach her a lesson?” (said Yoon Seul while approaching Ra Im)

“... When did the admission standards for this lounge become so loose? Isn't this place only for VVIP customers who spend more than 100 million won annually? Did you check her identification card when she came in?”

“... We are the ones who spent money but someone else drank the coffee. What is your name?” said Yoon Seul to Ah Young.

“Ma’am... I’m sorry. I’m really sorry.”

(Yoon Seul then snatched Ah Young’s name tag)

“Where are you going?”

“I have to get your name tag back.”

*“Ooh, don’t cause bigger trouble. **I just have to say sorry and listen to her belittle me.**”*

(Ep. 1, 08:49)

Yoon Seul, who is registered in the VVIP lounge thinks that by spending a certain amount of money, she has obtained the right to rule over the place. Although she is not the person responsible for the operation in the lounge, she thinks she has every right to manage the place, including the right to exercise force on the staff. Here, power is not distributed equally. Moreover, power is abused by the haves. The more money someone has, the bigger is his/her social magnitude. In between, hegemony comes into part. Ah Young feels that it is natural for a customer to “belittle” her for a mistake she did not do to the customer. What she understands is that if she demands for her right, which is to get her name tag back, she could be punished by the

authorities. The authority is also in this hegemonic circle because their function is to serve the interest of the dominant group as well. Despite their position, they can not do anything except to obey. As stated by Marx, the ideology of hegemony is to "... reproduce the class structure of the society ..." by "... representing class differences in such a way that they seem legitimate and natural." (644).

Another similar example of power abuse is showed in the proceeding scene. Yoon Seul and her friend were waiting to be picked up outside the lounge. Yoon Seul's friend was playing with her baby, who was cradled by a babysitter. The babysitter also held the lady's shopping bags and purse. Suddenly, a robber snatched the lady's purse from the babysitter. The lady panicked and scolded the babysitter instead.

"Do you know how much that bag costs?? What should I do??"

"Sorry Madam, I was worried about the baby getting hurt."

"Why are you making excuse with my baby? Give me my baby back! Are you in league with them? You must be with them!"

"No Madam, I am not!"

(Ep. 1, 09:31)

It is obvious that the robber is to be blamed. However, since the lady panicked, she accused the nearest person to her –her babysitter. The babysitter is apparently innocent, but she apologized anyway. She tried to defend herself, but the lady kept cursing her. The lady thought that because the babysitter belongs to the lower class, the babysitter must be similar to the robber who snatched her purse. Even if the innocent babysitter defended herself, the lady would not hear a word because she thinks that she has power and therefore, the right to decide who is right or wrong. If the babysitter persisted, she might even be fired by the lady. That is why, to save

herself, the babysitter tried to amend the situation by apologizing. Everything seems like the way it should be. And no one thinks, or dares to think that this whole thing is an inappropriate exercise of power.

2. *Hegemony: Class Struggle*

The beginning of the first episode introduced the life of the bourgeois. Money did not matter because they owned the means of production. They lived in large houses in elite housing complex, bought sports car and other luxurious goods without hesitation, and hanged out to exclusive places with exclusive friends. They were shown as proud individuals who did not care about being nice to people, to the point where they can make or break relationships as they like. This was shown in the first episode when Joo Won's celebrity cousin, Oska, was kissing with his girlfriend:

"I'm saying that we shouldn't meet again. I don't want to see you anymore," said Oska

"What? Then, what exactly was that kiss you did before?"

"Goodbye kiss. I want to remain in your memories as a sweet man up to the end."

"You bastard!"

(Ep. 1, 03:05)

They held no guilty feelings after hurting others. They did it just because they could, and just because there were still many people who were willing to get close to them because of their material wealth and fame. The society knew all of these traits, however their ethical complexity thought that these were normal and not bad, because by imitating those rich people, they would be accepted into the elite circle and obtain respect and admiration from the society.

Hegemony is inserted the minds of the proletariat, in the form of existential dependence. The society is not aware that they are working to serve the dominant group, and later, spend their earnings to fulfill the image of ideals set also by the very same dominant group. They do all of those willingly because they are unconscious of how the cycle is in reality. They are holding on to the hopes and dreams that by working and spending, they can be accepted into the top of the social strata. Class struggle is shown through the effort of those in the lower class to upgrade themselves in the social strata. For instance, in the first episode, during the arranged date, Yoon Seul tries hard to impress Joo Won by acting like a fine lady, who has a good taste of art (they were dating in an art gallery). She thinks highly of Joo Won, and is struggling to get connected to him in any ways, in order for her to step higher in the society.

This also happens to other people, shown in the VVIP lounge. They are willing to spend 100 million won annually just to get into this superficial elite circle in a small lounge. They are made to believe that the more you work, the more you buy, the more you can show off, the higher you will be regarded in the social ladder. However, they are not aware that this is all empty dreams, planned out by the dominant group to keep the production going. It is stated by Joo Won in the first episode. He was planning to arrange a lottery event as a strategy to get more people to shop in the department store;

“Vain women’s wallets open easier than housewives. I (as a woman) would rather open a luxurious and vain wallet. Money come more easily from it.”

(Ep. 1, 26:44)

The only thing that the dominant group thinks is how to get people to work more hours, and thus, giving more income and profit for them, while at the same time, maintaining their unconscious state regarding this condition. This continuous cycle gives way for the bourgeois to

stay in power because they keep gaining material wealth. At the same time, the society "... completely internalize them that they even 'induce pleasure'." (Bertens, 2009: 157). They keep the idea of achieving something through consuming, because of the addictive pleasure of artificial recognition (such as getting access to an elite VVIP lounge) given to them. It is saddening to see how hegemony is made prominent by installing the idea of superiority through possessions of beings.

3. ***Role of Intellectuals: The Raise of Mass Awareness and Counter Hegemony***

The role of intellectuals in *Secret Garden* is performed by persons who are not affected with the whole idea of accepting what the dominant groups set for the proletariat. They have adequate knowledge and the ability to reason, and therefore are able to decide how they should be treated, and to what extent they should obey with the ruling group. Using their knowledge, they are capable of setting an example in the society, in order to spread the awareness of the hegemonic social system. The role of intellectuals in bringing counter hegemony is performed by Ra Im and the action school director, Jong Soo. In the Korean society shown in *Secret Garden*, the dominant group establishes an important set of values that in order for you to secure your life and career, you have to follow what the authorities and the dominant groups tell you to, and that serving them is the number one duty that you should not defy.

Gil Ra Im

Ra Im shows examples of her rebellious acts of not accepting the seemingly common norms of the society; she refused to believe that it is normal for the bourgeois to oppress the proletariat. In the first episode, after Ra Im successfully retrieved the stolen bag, she asked Yoon Seul to return Ah Young's name tag and to just let go of what happened in the VVIP lounge.

“Since I got you friend’s bag for her, let’s pretend that nothing happened in the lobby before. Please give me the name tag.”

“I don’t have it.”

“You should have it with you.”

“I threw it away.”

“You threw it away?”

“If you search the garbage can in the corner..”

(Ra Im grasped Yoon Seul’s shirt in anger) “Where is the garbage in the corner? Someone who spends 100,000,000 at a department store and someone who gets a cup of coffe from her friend will both think that a garbage can is dirty. The one who threw it away should retrieve it.”

(Ep. 1, 11:48)

Ra Im thought that she had done the most sensible thing to do, which was to bargain with Yoon Seul in order to keep Ah Young from getting trouble at her work. Ra Im thought that Yoon Seul would be thankful to her on behalf of her friend the way Ra Im cared about Ah Young. However Ra Im did not know that Yoon Seul did not have such kind of empathy, even towards her friend. In contrary, Ra Im felt irritated because Yoon Seul kept looking down on her. Ra Im felt offended because Yoon Seul was so full of arrogance, she did not even bother to respond to Ra Im’s request. She demanded fairness from Yoon Seul.

She was able to break the common ‘unsaid’ rule that the proletariat must comply with the bourgeois’ deeds. In this case, she did not hesitate to warn Yoon Seul to treat her with respect. As a result, Yoon Seul was scared because she had never met anyone who dared to go against her. Ra Im was fully aware that even if someone has more money, it did not mean that s/he can abuse power to serve his/her own interest. Here, she was doing a counter-hegemonic act to

obtain her rights to be respected as fellow human being. Ra Im went further, demanding Yoon Seul to treat her with respect and to be responsible for what she did.

“Let’s pretend that it didn’t happen.” (Yoon Seul was pleading with fear to Ra Im)

(Yoon Seul finally opened her bag in annoyance, and took out Ah Young’s name tag)

“That’s enough, right? Accept it, so I can leave.”

(Ra Im took a used tissue from Yoon Seul’s friend) “You’re going to throw this away, right?” (She took Yoon Seul’s purse and throw the used tissue into the purse.)

“Are you crazy?? What do you think you’re doing??”

“Because I think that’s a garbage can.”

(Ep. 1, 12:26)

Not only that Ra Im reminded Yoon Soul how she should behave, she also set a standard of ethics for Yoon Seul and the others to see. This made Yoon Seul’s friend become more conscious of what is good or evil, and how fellow human beings should respect one another despite anything. Ra Im had successfully broken the hegemonic cycle and in addition, let others realize that unfairness should not be practiced in the society.

Another example of how the intellectuals have the power to fight against the bourgeois is shown in episode 4. Ra Im was dragged by Joo Won into his house, because her clothes was all wet after she walked into Joo Won’s backyard lake to retrieve a vacuum cleaner that Joo Won threw away. Joo Won felt guilty and forced Ra Im to take a shower in his house despite her not wanting it. However, they accidentally met Joo Won’s mother inside. Joo Won’s mother then said this particular sentence, *“How could you let this kind of woman get into the house? Even though you play around with girls, please, so that you won’t make me surprised, make sure that you will pick cultured women up,” (Ep. 4, 41:31).* Hearing that, Ra Im was not insulted nor

angry. She knew that this is the common behavior of the bourgeois when they come into contact with the proletariat. She calmly said to Joo Won's mother:

"I believe you don't have to worry about that kind of thing. That man who was luckily born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and has lived his life so easily, is not qualified to play around with me." (Ep. 4, 41:41)

Ra Im was sort of insinuating Joo Won's mother that it is not only the bourgeois who have the right to do anything they like; other classes are as free as the bourgeois to do what they want in their life. She also indicates that she is not interested in Joo Won, and that Joo Won is the one who is interested with her. She defended herself that she is not as lowly as Joo Won's mother thought; and she said it with pride and in a well-behaved manner. This shocked Joo Won's mother. She thought she had successfully humiliated Ra Im; she did not expect to be "beaten" by an equally dignified answer. This shows that the knowledge obtained by the intellectuals have the power to threaten the hegemonic cycle. When such attitude is amplified in the society, it can provide an equally powerful influence to bring mass awareness.

Jong Soo (Action School Director)

Jong Soo was an educated and professional stuntmen director. He knew what was best and what was the limit for his team. He was not hesitant to defend his team from being oppressed by the superiors. His experience in the professional field made him fully aware that a stuntman was often not regarded as an important part in the movie-making process. He understood that most people did not realize that these stuntmen were the ones who were subjected to danger and even death, most of the time. In *Secret Garden*, the leading actress, the star in the movie-making

process, thought that the existence of these stuntmen in the movie was merely for the sake of her own success. This condition resembled the bourgeois-proletariat relationship norms.

In the first episode, Jong Soo firmly pointed out to the director that his stuntwoman (Ra Im) was also an actress and that she deserved a fair treatment, instead of being scolded for a mistake she did not do (the leading star had a petty injury because of her own recklessness). The director threatened to fire Jong Soo's team, but he said that, *"Even if you don't do it (fire his team), I am going to leave. I don't want my people working with unprofessionals."* He rejected to be abused and threatened just because people think the director has the most power, is always right, and that all these egocentric acts are normal.

In communicating with his team and in his professional work, Jong Soo always maintains his straight-forward manner. He does not bother changing this attitude despite knowing whom he is talking to. In the third episode, he showed no doubt in addressing what he wanted to say to Joo Won, even if Joo Won tried to underestimate him.

"By the way, why did you come here today?" (Joo Won asked Jong Soo)

"I guess you're not that happy to see me?"

"Are we in a relationship in which we'd be happy to see each other?"

"I don't think that we are in the kind of relationship that you could treat me in that rude way. Since you arrived at my action school with no resume, so did I."

"You seem to be very small-minded."

"It can't be. Do you make guests stand around like this over here?"

"Aren't you going to leave soon?"

"It'll only take a minute. Let's sit down."

(Ep. 3, 18:34)

Jong Soo insisted that Joo Won treated him with respect, just like how people would treat guests who come into their office. Jong Soo knew exactly the limitations between respect and consent. Furthermore, he is capable of making Joo Won comply to his standards. This assertive attitude is the key to creating a counter hegemony. In exemplifying hegemony, Bertens said that "... the ruling class makes its own values and interests central in what it presents as a common, neutral, culture." (2009: 204). Therefore, it is the duty of the intellectuals to understand what is the real situation behind this seemingly normal society, and take a stand in defending their rights and pride.

4. *The Media*

Following the discussion on hegemony and the role of intellectuals in *Secret Garden*, another question appears: if the key to overpowering hegemony is in the establishment of education for the society, why is hegemony still a prominent issue in today's society? In *Secret Garden*, we can see that South Korea is one of the most developed countries in Asia. Therefore, relevantly speaking, education is not a main concern anymore because a system has been established for everyone to have access to it. If education is no longer in effect for bringing mass awareness, then there should be another aspect to the establishment of hegemony in today's society.

If we look back to the beginning of the movie, audience is exposed to the world of celebrity and mass media power. Joo Won is a public figure due to his family's position in the society and his success in being a young CEO of a large department store. Oskan, Joo Won's cousin, is a K-pop idol who has debuted in all over Asia. The success of these Korean idols in shaping the society's image of ideality is brought up by the media through the cultural (entertainment) industry. Yong Jin stated in his journal on the Hallyu phenomena that

“... the cultural markets have rapidly shifted, from virtual goods-driven to access-oriented watching markets, because global consumers watch and play cultural genres through social media ...” (2012: 6)

In *Secret Garden*, everything that these characters do, especially Oska, is always monitored by the media. People watch from all over the world, and this concept of ideal life is installed in people's mind by means of mass entertainment. It influences people to desire to become what they see, and finally, enter the circle of consumerism. Media helps these idols succeed in building their image in the society.

At the same time, media can be an enemy. When Oska had a scandal with Chae-Rin, his ex-girlfriend, the media was craving for it, to the point where Oska had to hide himself. Chae-Rin, on the other hand, took advantage of the media to threaten Oska by announcing to the society that she was being mistreated by him. She knew that the media has the power to shape people's perception, and direct their ethical complexity towards what the media wanted them to believe. Chae-Rin knew that one awful scandal could immediately damage Oska's long-built career; and this is what people, especially public figures, fear the most.

Therefore, it is evident that media has the power to overthrow someone's, or even a big corporation's reputation. Regardless of what is true, society is a loyal spectator of the media, and their opinion goes along with what they see as reality in the paper, or on the screen. Going back a few decades, if we analyze further, Gramsci was imprisoned because he kept publishing political writings in order for the society to realize the reality. Unfortunately, literacy is still an issue back then, so it was probably difficult for people to understand the content of Gramsci's writing. Today, technology has enabled everyone to have access to news at all times.

In episode 14, after a series of rumour, the media finally announced that Joo Won was officially in relationship with Ra Im. The next morning, Joo Won was so afraid to look at the stock valuation in his office computer. The power of the media was shown to be so great that even a person as confident and powerful as Joo Won could feel intimidated. To bring the matter further, the media could alter the consumers' perception regarding products they usually consume, even if the news was not related to the product itself. It is the reputation that made the bourgeois stay on the top of the social strata, and so far, the media plays a significant role in advancing, or bringing them down.

In relation to the power of mass media in today's society, therefore, it is of great importance that *Secret Garden*, as well as other similar K-dramas, is taken into consideration as one of the forms of mass media, under the scope of entertainment industry. Looking at how these dramas present similar social issue, it is imperative that we analyse the motive behind the publication of these dramas. Is it one of the bourgeois' agenda on re-establishing the concept of hegemony, or the intellectuals' strive for movement towards mass awareness? These two motives can both be considered as the possible outcomes of the media exposure on the society due to the endemic effect these dramas. In order to come with one definite answer, a further sociological research is essential to be conducted.

V. Conclusion

Hegemony, as Gramsci proposed in the early 20th century, has remained in the heart of today's society. In the South Korean society shown in *Secret Garden*, it is evident that hegemony is exercised by the bourgeois, who exist in the society as wealthy and respected family, owning large corporations and holding significant positions in the country (prime minister, dean, patron). They are fully aware of their power and dominance, and thus, tend to abuse these in order to

obtain what they want. We can see that there is unequal power distribution between the classes. To reason why this unfair power issue does not give way to conflict is hegemony. Hegemony makes people believe that what they experience in the society is a naturally occurring norms. They are led to accept this condition willingly, and believe that the world is made to be that way.

However, as Bertens quoted from Raymond Williams, he sees that hegemony is not the end of the the societal evolution:

“... ‘hegemony is not singular ... its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended ... they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified’.” (2009: 89)

This means that there is still a way of challenging the practices of hegemony, and Gramsci emphasizes the role of educated intellectuals in bringing mass consciousness, and create a counter hegemony.

In today's context of reality, the role of the intellectuals is still very much needed. However, society evolves, education systems are elaborated, and Gramsci's emphasize on the sole importance of knowledge to overthrow hegemony is no longer in effect. In the age of technology advancement, it is the media that shapes the society's image of reality. It is capable of both spreading the truth, or provoking people. Its great influential power is able to support to the intellectuals in spreading mass awareness to overcome hegemony. *Secret Garden*, as one of the model for analysis in this research, is in fact a form of mass media, functioning as a tool that is directed towards two possible purpose in the society; to re-induce hegemony in today society and maintain the status quo, or bring about people's awareness of their role as intellectuals who are able to fight against the injustice of hegemony.

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